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**The Life and death
of Fair Rosamond**

[London]

[179-?]

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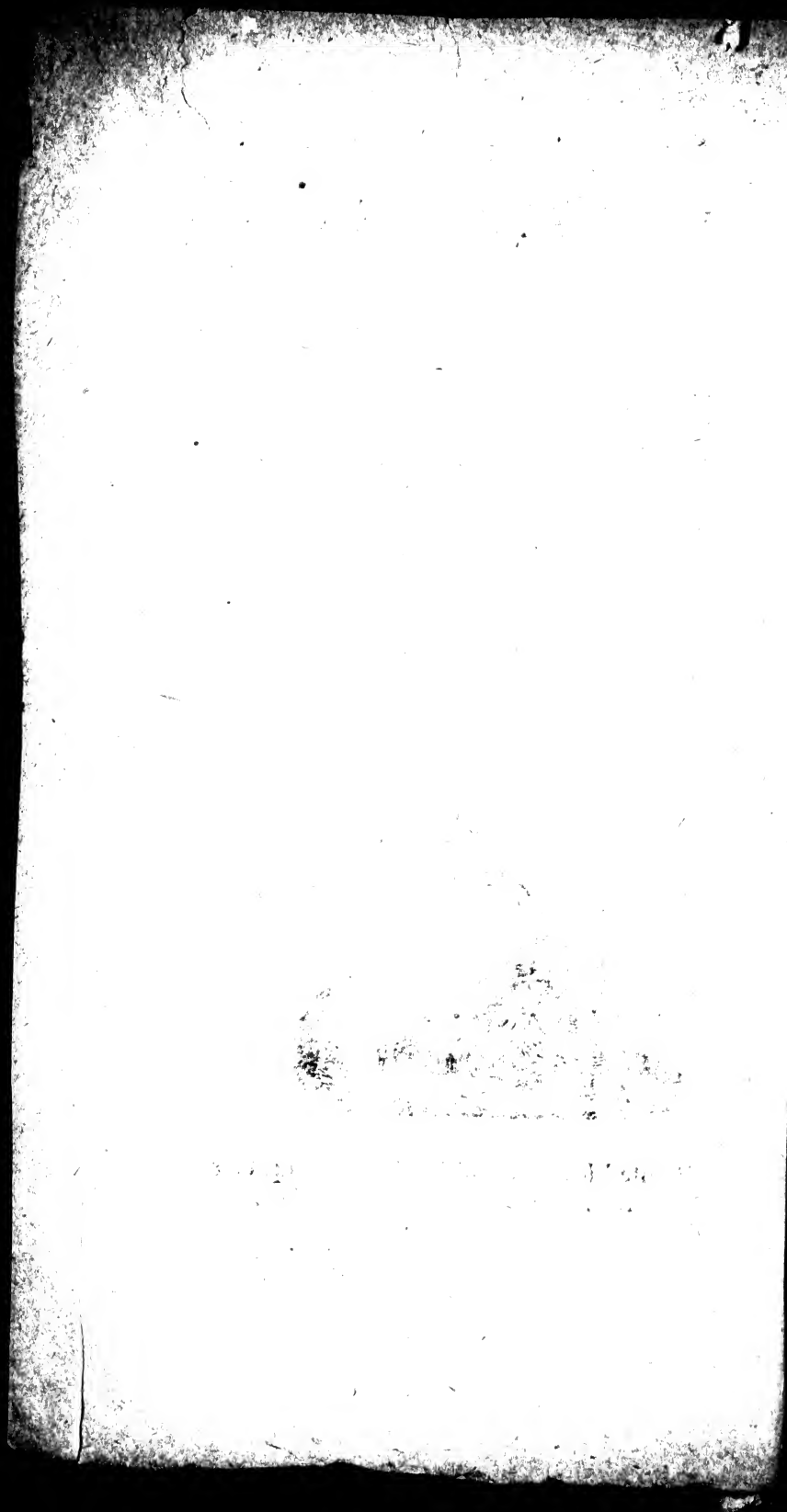
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THE
LIFE AND DEATH
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CONCUBINE TO
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Printed for and sold by J. Pitts, 14, Great
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THE
HISTORY
OF
FAIR
ROSAMOND.

CHAPTER I.

*The Family of Fair Rosamond, with a
Description of her Person.*

THERE sprung from the ancient
and most noble house of the
Cliffords, a damsel named Rosamond,
daughter to the Lord Walter Clifford.
Her beauty was couched under her
name. She was Nature's master-

piece, and one of the fairest roses that ever flourished upon the earth.

This lady as she grew in years grew in favour each year, adding to her great perfections. And having attained unto some years, Fame carried her praise into foreign places, whereby she was not only the common discourse of our nation, but the table talk of remote countries.

One thing, as being the short way of giving our readers a sketch of her matchless beauty and which very much tended to the ruin of Rosamond, we must not omit:—Once, when King Henry and one of his courtiers were together, the King taking an opportunity to commend with more than ordinary heat one of the court, the courtier told him, He thought he had praised her more than her perfections deserved; but that he had a neice, whose beauty was peerless; and then begun to talk of her as the most beautiful of the creation, telling the King that her eyes sparkled like two twin stars, her forehead was like a heaven of chrysal, her eye-brows shone like jet,

a sprig of roses and lilies were in her cheeks so mixed that Nature never before made so fair a mixture of red and white.

To be brief, he told the King she was Nature's master-piece, who, when she had made her, cried, 'A lucky hit, and threw away the mould, that none so lovely and charming might come after, to dazzle the eyes of mankind, and wound their hearts.' The king, hearing this relation, could not but smile with joy, and demanded of him in what corner of the earth so fine a beauty could be hid. At this the courtier perceived he had gone too far as the King began to be enamoured at the bare report would have drawn his words in again, telling the King he had made this report only to set forth a perfect beauty to the life. But the King perceiving by the coolness of the reply, there was more than ordinary in it ordered him to speak the truth, and the courier fearing the King's displeasure, plainly said, There is a lady, daughter to Walter Lord Clifford, of whom many noble persons

have been enamoured, and have sought her in marriage, but have been denied on account of her tender years.

It was not long ere the King resolved to make a tour to her father's house, and coming there, he was welcomed by the lady, who fearing his design, ordered her daughter not to come into his presence. But the King finding she was at home demanded to see her, vowing he would not dine till he had. So that, all her excuses of illness availed nothing. Then she was ordered to put on her best apparel and come down, that she might pay her duty to the King, which she did in the most courtly manner, her blushes, if possible, adding to her beauty, so that at first sight she appeared in his eyes like a bright angel, whereupon her eagerly saluted her and dinner being placed on the table, he commanded she should sit down, causing her to be placed directly over against him, on whose bright eyes he so long gazed that he forgot sometimes to eat.

CHAPTER II.

How the King gained the love of Fair Rosamond.

THE King being highly entertained by Rosamond's father, he had several opportunities of discoursing in private with the charming virgin whom he had so much won upon by presents of rich jewels and other costly things, that he raised ambition in her tender breast, that before, was a stranger to it; and often protested, that was the Queen to die, he would raise her to the dignity of the crown.

He also bestowed his gold liberally on the woman who had the care of her education, which so blinded her and prevailed over her conscience, that she promised him to do all that was in her power to further his wished for happiness: and so taking leave of his beloved Rosamond, with many loving kisses, he departed.

The King immediately returned to this palace, but never could be at rest

for the violent passion which still reigned in his breast; he could not sleep in the night nor attend his councils in the day.

At length he resolved to write to Fair Rosamond, let his fate be whatever it would; and accordingly he wrote a letter to her, in which he told her it was she who was his guardian angel; and that he held her more dear than his crown; and assured her that his stay from her should not be long, promising to set her in a very glittering sphere; and concluded with desiring her to send him a line of comfort from her own hand.

This letter somewhat surprised Rosamond, that she could not tell how to proceed. However, she resolved to shew it her governess, who no sooner saw it than she inwardly rejoiced and smiling at Rosamond, advised her to send the King a favourable answer, and not let too much modesty hinder her from being mistress to so great a King. This made her blush, struggling hard with herself until, at last this crafty matron used so many press-

ing arguments, that she consented to return the King an answer, telling him that she was greatly astonished at receiving his letter; but as to being placed in a glittering sphere. she never wished for it; only assuring him, that in whatever was agreeable to the rules of strict modesty, she was his majesty's most humble servant. The governess having got this letter from the young lady, sent it to the King, who, upon receiving it, kissed it an hundred times, resolving not to be long without the enjoyment of this fair creature: which, however, he found some difficulty in effecting, as the next chapter will make appear.



CHAPTER III.

*The King after much difficulty, gets
Rosamond to Court.*

IT happened that Lady Clifford, going into her daughter's closet, accidentally espied the king's letter to Rosamond, at which being greatly surprised, she called her daughter, and asked her the meaning of that letter. Rosamond was as much surprised at the question, and not knowing what answer to make, made her blushes pass for one. Her mother took the letter in her hand to Lord Clifford, who was much disturbed thereat, and both came together to Rosamond's chamber and upbraided her with being a concubine to the King. Rosamond at this kneeling down, solemnly protested, that she was still a pure and unblemished virgin, and had never given herself up to the King's embraces, or that of any other person.

This solemn protestation somewhat appeased her father's anger, who for

the satisfaction of his mind, desired her to tell the whole truth, which she did, from the first courtship of the King, to the receiving of the letter. When they had heard her story, they both advised her against yielding to the King's embraces, and told her that for her own security, she had better go to a kinsman of his in Cornwall, and reside there some time.

To this Rosamond agreeing, they sent her and her governess to Cornwall, where they thought she would be safe. But all these endeavours were in vain; for the governess being largely bribed by king Henry, was all this while the grand intriguer in this love affair, who sent the King a full account of all things that had passed, and how far they were sent to take the air.

King Henry having this intelligence, resolved to have her out of their hands, and thereupon sent for her uncle, who being come, he told him he had a piece of service to command him in, which was to go to his kinsman's in Cornwall, and use his

best endeavours to bring Rosamond to the court, without her parents knowledge.

Her uncle was somewhat surpris'd at the King's demand ; but the consideration of losing the great offices he held under the King made him undertake the ungrateful service which was impos'd upon him. Accordingly, coming to where King Henry had directed him, he made as if he had call'd by chance, being come about some other business. After some discourse, he asked her if she would go up to court ?—to which she seem'd not much unwilling. Without any more ado, he provided a chariot for her journey, and attended by her governess, brought her to court and put her in some private lodging appointed for her reception.

Her uncle having acquainted the King that she was come, and how he had dispos'd of her, he came that night to visit her ; and now seeing that beauty, in its full bloom, which before was but blooming, he was surpris'd both with wonder and amazement.

After some love discourse had passed between them, the King took his leave, telling her he would not disturb her that night, on account of the fatigue of the journey, but that he would visit her again shortly. So charging her uncle to have a particular regard to her, and see that she wanted nothing, he departed.

Her governess did all she could to persuade her to yield to the King's embraces, but Rosamond seemed averse to it, her father's words still running in her mind. The King, having visited Rosamond two or three times, began to grow impatient, and thought it was high time to have some close conversation with her, and, if possible to make her submit to his embraces. For this end he came one evening, and told her. He perceived she had not the value for him he thought she had.

Rosamond not understanding the King's meaning, protested, 'That so great a value she had for him, that was she to see him wounded, and her heart's blood would do him good, she

would freely resign it to him. To this the King, fetching a sigh, answered, 'Ah ! my Rosamond: since you will force me to speak, know it is your beauty that has wounded me ; love calls for love, neither can my wounds be cured without enjoyment.

Rosamond was extremely surprised at what the King had said, and begged him to ask her life, or any thing that was in her power to give, so as it was not her honour. The King was mightily surprised to hear such words from her, as thinking to have made an easy conquest, and was as much in love with her virtue as he was with her beauty.

The King having left Rosamond went to her governors, and told what a repulse he had met with from Rosamond instead of that enjoyment he expected. She as one that was hardened in wickedness, answered, 'If your Majesty will be advised by me, I could put you in a way so succeed, which is, you shall come into my chamber at night, and I will convey you to Rosamond when she is asleep. At this

contrivance the King was much pleased, and accordingly was with her at the time appointed, and was conveyed into Rosamond's chamber.

She was asleep when he first went to bed, but laying closer than her governess used to do, she waked of herself and then the King discovered himself.

It is not easy to imagine how great was the surprise that Rosamond was in at this discovery, and fain would she have got out of bed, but the King would not let her. She made many efforts to get away, but finding them all in vain, she at last yielded herself to the King's embraces, which pleased him so well, that before morning he pleased her too.

For a time these lovers often met, and enjoyed their wanton dalliances; but the King had been wont to shew the same kindness to others, who finding themselves neglected for this peerless beauty, soon spread abroad the King's familiarity with Rosamond.

CHAPTER IV.

*The king builds a bower for Rosamond,
and soon after leaves her.*

THE envious Queen Eleanor when she perceived neither kind words nor threats would wean the King's love from his new mistress set her engines to work to fright her from his arms, and several letters were dropped in her lodgings, threatening her destruction, which were shewn to the King; whereupon he appointed a strong guard to wait upon her at home and abroad. And to remove her farther from the Queen's sight, he caused a fine palace to be built at Woodstock, in Oxfordshire, which was so very ingeniously contrived, that none could enter into the apartment where Rosamond generally resided, without the help of a silver thread.

This more vexed the enraged Queen wherefore she consulted with her sons then men grown, how to be revenged, and after many things proposed, it

was agreed that Prince Richard should go and join the French, to raise war against his father in Normandy, which if effected speedily, would draw the King to the aid of his subjects; and so in his absence the Queen might better effect the ruin of Rosamond.

Prince Richard immediately went to the task, which when the king heard he raised an army, resolved to pass the seas, and put an end to those tumults. Rosamond when she heard this dismal news, threw herself on the ground, tearing her hair, and lamenting of her hard fortune; in which condition the King found her when he came to bid her farewell; and when she saw him she fell on his neck, crying, 'Ah! my dearest Prince, is then fortune so unkind to us that we must so soon part? and as my perswading soul forebodes, for the last time in this world. O take me with you, for there is no safety for me in this world but in your royal camp.

She would have proceeded, but the King stopped her mouth with many tender kisses, and interrupting her,

said, 'My fairest Rose, you are not fit to brook the toils of war—ladies cannot endure the fatigues and hardships of camps—peace and delightful pleasures are most agreeable to their tempers. He then called to him Sir Thomas her uncle, to whom he said, 'I commit this inestimable jewel to your care, and command you, on your life, that none be permitted to see her till I return. And my fair mistress, I shall often write to you and expect your answers. But, Rosamond, continued the King, I think there is something so mournful in this our parting, that I could hang for ever on thy neck but I have far to go, and must hasten.' 'And so have I, said Rosamond if death is far.' And so in tears they parted.



CHAPTER V.

*Of the king's departure--the Queen finds
means to enter the bower,
and murder Fair
Rosamond.*

FAIR but disconsolate Rosamond, as soon as the King was out of sight, with a dismal ear-piercing cry threw herself down upon a couch and fell into a swoon; from which when her attendants recovered her, she often fainted, that her maids had much ado to keep life in her; but when she recovered, she gave herself up to deep sorrow and melancholy, refusing to be comforted for several weeks, her sleep still going from her, and when she slumbered a little she started, crying, 'O save me, save me here is the Queen! she's got me at last! and with the fright she awaked, scared and terrified with her dreams. Nor was it without reason that Rosamond was thus afflicted in her mind, for all this while Queen Eleanor was plotting

her destruction. To effect which she herself proposed it to some favourites whom she raised from a low condition to a high promotion, but they started at it as a thing full of danger, seeing if it was known, their lives would surely be forfeited and lost at the king's return, unless they fled the land and left all behind them.

This so enraged the jealous Queen, that she reviled them with reproaches of cowardice and ingratitude, for the many favours she had heaped upon them, which, with some persuasions and large offers, prevailed so far with some of her domestics, that they resolved to stand by her in any dangerous attempt.

It being summer time, she took a progress, as she gave it out, for her health, attended by the conspirators, appointing a set time for her companions to hide themselves in a cave that was near the bower, and at the sound of a horn do as she required: at the same time giving one directions to dress like a post-man, and carry a letter as if it came from the King, and

when he had delivered it he blew his horn.

This dunning device took, for the too credulous knight seeing only the postman, came without the gate, when upon the signal given those in ambush rushed upon him. He fought valiantly with them and was seconded by the guards, but being overpowered by numbers, he was slain, with many of the guards belonging to both sides. The fight being over, and the gates seized by her party the Queen came to the palace, and getting the silver clue, she entered the bower and in an upper room she found the beautiful and fair Rosamond, shining bright like an angel.

Fair Rosamond, when she saw the angry Queen before her, trembling from head to foot and falling on her knees, implored her mercy and pardon for her offences, and begged she would forgive her for a crime she was constrained to act and promised immediately to cloister herself up in a nunnery, leave the kingdom, or do any thing else her Majesty required.

The Queen being inflexible, told her none of her excuses would prevail ; and presenting her with a bowl of poison and a dagger, saying, “ You harlot, now make your choice ; if your curious and dainty palate cannot relish poison, I have got steel for you.

The sorrowful lady perceiving there was no remedy, but she must die, stood upon her feet, and with abundance of tears and piteous wringing of the hands, she begged mercy of God for her youthful sins and failings, desiring that all other stately beauties might be warned by her fall not to be proud and aspiring, but rather contented with a lowly state and condition, and often calling for mercy she with trembling hands put the bowl up to her mouth and drank the poison, which ended her life.

The Queen had her buried with the rest that were slain, and so departed, rejoicing in the success her revenge had upon her rival, but little thought of the misery it would pull on her own head.

The King soon after returned home.

but had no sooner new of this tragical end, than his great joy was turned into mourning, and in distraction he rent his robes, shut himself up in a chamber, and would not suffer any one to speak to him for many days.

When the King had a little eased his grief, he summoned his judges, and ordered them to make a strict enquiry for those that were guilty of this most heinous offence: who, fearing his displeasure, were so diligent therein, that most of them were apprehended, tried, and put to the most cruel tortures; and they accused the Queen, and laid the blame upon her, who not being able to bear herself out, for so fierce was the King's indignation, that neither her apologies, tears, nor the intercession of the nobles in her behalf, could appease his wrath and anger; but she being a foreign princess, her life was spared, yet the King not only renounced her, but confined her for his life-time in a close imprisonment, commanding if she died he, body should not be buried, but left to moulder to dust.

Nor would he forgive her at his death (for she out-lived him) and was set at liberty after his decease, by her son Richard, who succeeded him; and the Queen considering the hardships of imprisonment by experience, she by her own liberality and the interest she had with her son, for the most part set the prison gates open, as well to criminals as debtors.

King Henry having thus wreaked his vengeance on the murderers of his lovely Rosamond, caused her body to be taken up and buried with all funeral pomp at Godstow, in Oxfordshire, erecting to her memory a very stately tomb, on which was this inscription.

Within this tomb lies the world's chiefest Rose,

She who was once so sweet will now offend the nose.

FINIS.

Printed for and sold by J. Pitts, No. 14, Great St. Andrew Street Seven Dials; Jennings, Waterlane.